Settlements

Geography Notes

JC-Learn

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The landscape today shows evidence of human settlement, past and present. The location of initial settlement in an area is related to two factors:

- Where people were coming from
- Their need for water, food, defence and communication

*It is believed that the first settlers of Ireland came over from Britain across narrow strips of land known as land bridges. Eventually, as more ice melted, sea levels rose above the land bridges and covered them.

Needs of the Pre-Christian Settlers

- Pre-Christian settlements are those established before the arrival of St Patrick in Ireland in the fifth.

1. Water -
   - They needed a clean, regular supply of water for their everyday needs such as washing, cleaning, drinking and cooking, so settled beside rivers and lakes.

2. Food -
   - They were hunter-gatherers. They would settle near rivers and lakes to have a plentiful supply of fish to eat. After a while they began to farm too, so settled on fertile lowlands where they could grow cereals and rear animals.

3. Defence -
   - From about 3,000 years ago, Celtic people came to Ireland and their settlements were surrounded by stone walls (walls known as rath, ðún or líos). Some settlements were built on hills (hill fort), centre of lakes (crannógs) or beside cliffs (promontory fort) for further protection.

4. Communications -
   - Transport and movement mainly happened on rivers in boats. Settlements were, as a result, located along river valleys on the dry sites, which were located outside the river’s floodplain.
Celts also cleared forest to make way for agricultural land and also for construction of route ways between tuaths (territories). In places, these route ways extended into marshy areas so they put down planks of oak to act as routes between dry areas. These routes are known as toghers.

Settlement Patterns
There are three types of settlements:
- Nucleated (clustered) settlements are grouped together. This may occur where roads meet.
- Linear (ribboned) settlements are in a line. This may occur where houses are built along a road.
- Dispersed (scattered) are scattered all over an area. This may be the case where farmhouses are scattered throughout the countryside, i.e. there is no definite pattern.

Patterns in the distribution of nucleated settlements in Ireland are related to a number of factors, which include:
- Social and historical reasons: past patterns and processes, eg. Dublin
- Resources and terrain: altitude, drainage patterns and land quality, eg. Dublin

Social and historical factors
Viking settlements:
- They came in the 8th century to Dublin, Wexford and Waterford. They were raiders of monasteries and traders at river mouths.

Monastic settlements:
- They settled throughout the country (Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly) and were raided by Vikings. They provided charity and education for nucleated settlements.

Norman settlements:
- They came in the 12th century to Kilkenny, Athlone and Trim. They invaded established Viking settlements and also
conquered new lands. They built defensive settlements (stone castles) and towns developed around these settlements (often at river mouth).

Plantation settlements:
- Developed in the 16th century in Ulster and Munster. The British confiscated the lands. They brought with them their language, culture, customs and religion.

*A primate city is a city that is at least twice the size of the next largest city in that country, eg. Dublin. Why is Dublin a primate city?
- Seat of government here
- Centre of trade (IFSC)
- Chief port of goods coming into and leaving the country
- Route focus within Ireland
- Contains headquarters of Ireland’s financial institutions

Resources and terrain
The following factors influence the distribution of nucleated settlements -

1. Altitude: Generally located on low-lying area (easy to access and build settlements here). It is less windy, and therefore warmer here too, so people avoid mountains (steep and wet). Fertile soils may be also found on low-lying areas.

2. Drainage: Generally located in well-drained areas with rivers (near flood plain on a dry site). Fertile flood plain means alluvium deposits are found here, so soils are fertile. The river gives water for cooking and cleaning too. The lowest bridging point is also where many towns develop. It is where trade is facilitated.

3. Land quality: Fertile low land attracts settlers (east of Ireland is often more fertile). The West has poor soil, and is also more mountainous with higher levels of rainfall.
New Settlement Patterns

*Case Study: Polders in the Netherlands*

Polders are areas of land that have been reclaimed from the sea. The two reclamations of land undertaken were known as the Zuider Zee project and the Delta project.

**Zuider Zee Project**

This was the reclamation of land from the sea between 1927 and 1968. During the reclamation, four polders were formed. These were Wieringermeer, Northeast polder, Eastern Flevoland and Southern Flevoland. These new areas of land were to provide new land for two main uses - farming and settlement.

How polders were constructed:

1. Sewall (dyke) built around area to be reclaimed
2. Series of drainage channels built inland to help drain the polder
3. Water pumped from within area into canals located on or beyond the dyke wall. Draining the land area was a slow process.
4. When polder dried out, work began on new land, for farming or settlement.

*The Randstad conurbation (conurbation = cities growing into each other to form a large urban area) refers to a collection of Dutch cities growing into each other to form a large urban area. The following cities are part of this:*

- Amsterdam
- Rotterdam
- The Hague
- Utrecht
Functions of Nucleated Settlements

The functions of a settlement are those services which are provided for the people of that settlement and also for the people of the hinterland, i.e. surrounding area.

Nucleated settlements can be classified by their function:

1. Village - provide small number of services to cater for needs of hinterland. These services include small shops, pub, post office and small primary school.
2. Market - grew up around trade and provide wide range of services. They include jewelers, dentists, banks, cinema, clothes shops etc.
3. Defence - these often developed around castles that offered protection in times of attack.
4. Port - these have facilities for ships to dock, e.g. Dublin.
5. Resource-based - these developed as a result of extracting resources from earth’s surface (Navan, Co Meath).
6. Residential/dormitory - people lived here on the outskirts of cities and commuted to work in the city daily (Malahide).
7. Recreational - these are often holiday resorts which offer many attractions, like scenery and accommodation. These include hotels, guesthouses, golf courses etc.
8. Ecclesiastical - these provide a religious function. They may have developed around monasteries, which provided education. They still cater for religious needs today as there are churches in most settlements (Knock, Co Mayo).

*Case Study: Limerick*
- Market function - it has developed at a bridging point on the River Shannon. It has become a route focus (important roads meet in Limerick which encourages people to go there). The River Shannon has been important for development of trade and fertile soils have aided local dairy farming.
- Port function - it is located in the estuary of the River Shannon. Industries (Aughnish Alumina) have located there, and this location means ease of transport of products to market in Europe.
- Ecclesiastical function - St Mary’s Cathedral is located here and Limerick also has an important administrative and ecclesiastical function as it is the seat of bishops for different dioceses. It also has many churches.

*The River Rhine (comes up in short questions in junior cert exam) has its source in the Swiss Alps and enters the North Sea at Rotterdam.

*Case Study: Cologne (Köln)*
This is located along the River Rhine and has three main functions:
- Market function - it is at a bridging point on the River Rhine and is recognised as a nodal centre. It is an important market centre with many services.
- Port function - It is an important settlement and river port on the River Rhine. The port deals with large vessels.
• Recreational function - Cologne has become an important location for tourists. It offers a variety of attractions such as Cologne Cathedral.

Functions Changing Over Time
Settlements may change in function over time, for example:
• Where mining becomes important such as in Navan, Co. Meath.

*Case study: Navan, Co. Meath

Past functions -
• Monastic settlement: It came into existence as a result of an establishment of a monastery.
• Defence town: During Norman times, it was a defence town, with walls surrounding the town.
• Market town: The fertile lowland of Navan are perfect for rearing cattle and growing cereals, so this farm produce benefitted the local population.

Present functions -
• Mining town: In 1970, deposits of lead and zinc were discovered within 3km of Navan. Tara Mines opened in 1977 and began to extract ore. Ores are extracted from the mine and are processed and made into fine powder. The fine powder is transported by train from Navan to Dublin Port and then shipped across Europe.

Positive effects of Tara Mines on Navan
• Employs about 650 full-time employees
• Spin off industries (shops, garages etc.) enjoy increased business and flow of money through local economy
• Services and facilities improved